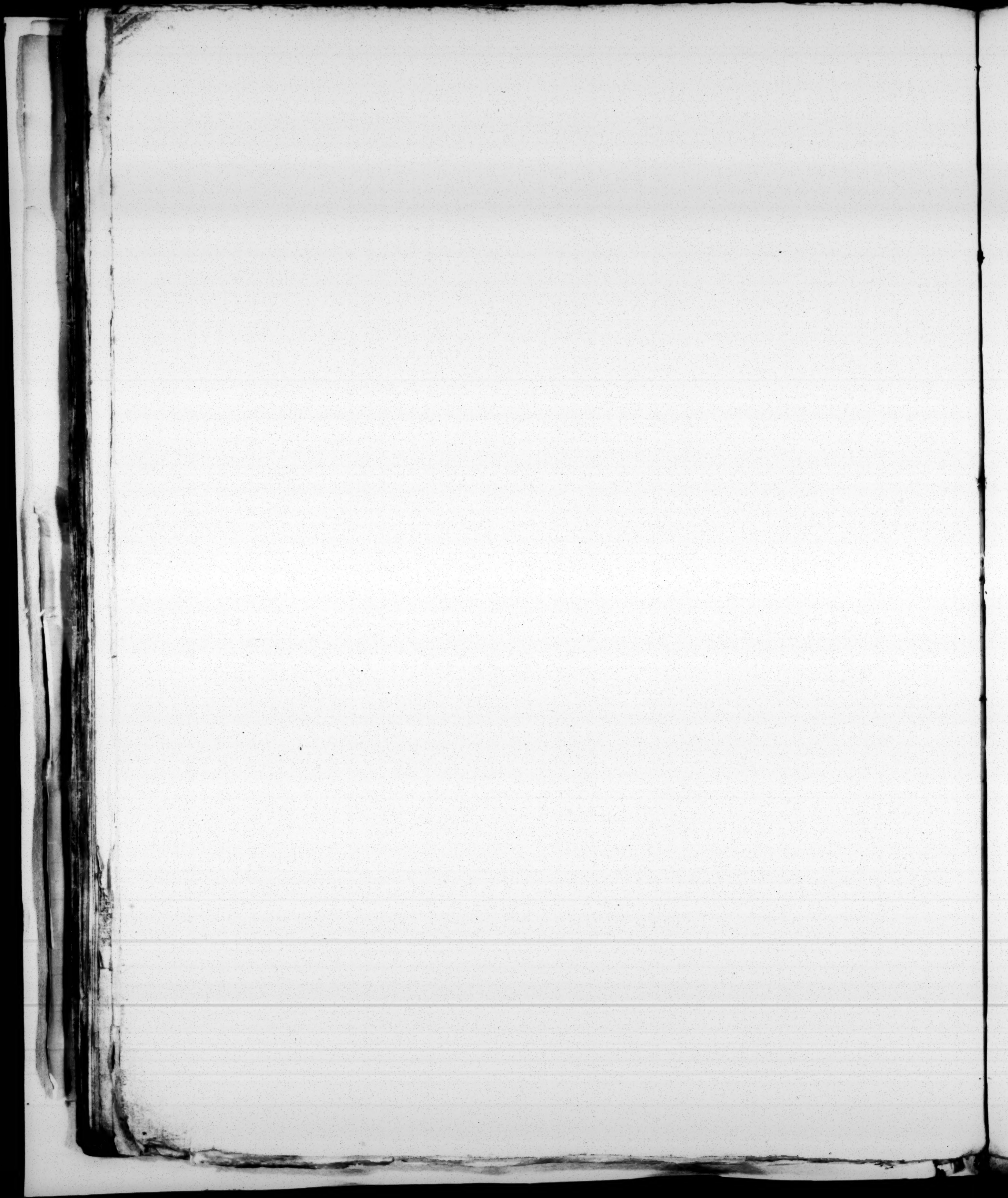


1792

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LETTER, &c.



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LETTER

FROM

AN UNDERGRADUATE

TO THE

REV. *. C * * * * *, M.A.

FELLOW, &c. &c. OF TRINITY COLLEGE,

CAMBRIDGE.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR A. HAMILTON, NEAR GRAY'S-INN GATE, HOLBORN.

1792.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

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L E T T E R, &c.

REVEREND SIR,

YOU must suffer the intrusion of an Undergraduate without receiving any apology: I know you will resent it as highly inconsistent with your dignity, and I trust you will feel it no less unwelcome to your repose. Your appointment of a Junior as Lecturer, and the manner in which the appointment is confirmed on your part, have removed every sentiment of reverence which your station naturally inspires, and have induced me to address you in a style somewhat rude and abrupt.

B

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An abuse of power, when sanctioned by precedent becomes a privilege: I am too well acquainted with the general character of a Senior Fellow, and the pertinacity with which these animals preserve their own habits and opinions, to expect that any change can be produced by expostulation. The precedent will, no doubt, be established; the validity of the precedent, I much wish to destroy.

The Fellows of this Society, it may be presumed, evince by their election their capacity of administering its offices, and by their connection with its interests have a prior claim to every lucrative employment which it affords. Their right, it should seem, cannot be superseded but by some extraordinary disqualification. The other Seniors may with justice also complain, since each possesses a prior claim to the Junior by virtue of that rule, which gives the preference to the Senior. Nor unless in peculiar cases will this rule ever be infringed without an evil influence upon the welfare of the Society. For promotion will then become precarious and uncertain, and many able men will consequently withdraw themselves from that line of life, where their abilities should ever be fought with avidity, and where they cannot fail to be exerted with success. A court system of fraud and collusion will be introduced, and the character of the Society shamefully debased. Such will be the evil consequences; and I affirm, that in present case the interests of your

College

College demand an observance of the general rule in contempt of any advantage which the infringement may offer.

If you will expand and improve this reasoning, you will be convinced that you have acted most unjustly; if you can anticipate the immediate consequences of your conduct, you will be sensible that you have acted most imprudently. All those whom you have included in the disgraceful parenthesis, you have made your enemies; and they are enemies, Sir, whose enmity is of the most defensible nature, since it is provoked by a palpable injury. But you are perhaps inclined in the commencement of your official career to imitate the General, who having enjoyed an age of conquest, purposely embarrassed his situation to display the force of his good fortune and ability. You have indeed marked the ground of an attack, which your character, however well established, cannot withstand; and your name, which has hitherto been received always with respect, and not unfrequently with esteem, must now become an object of reproach. You have completely reduced the inequality which we expected to remark between yourself and your predecessor; nor will your injustice and partiality be less notorious than his indolence and incapacity.

I am sensible the Senior possesses an imperfect right; nor can I deny the power of the College to admit or reject his claim, as adventitious circumstances may advise. But I cannot suppose, that an indefinite power of election resides in the Tutor. The disposal of the Lectureship is a patronage of great value, and consequently attended with power of large extent, which, as you have given an ample proof, when consigned to one, who acknowledges no responsibility, is capable of the most injurious abuse.

But, Sir, had not the manner in which you confirmed the appointment, engaged my attention more than the injustice and imprudence of the measure itself, as being no peer of your realm, I should not have entered my protest. You would only have excited my compassion as a man whose prudence and virtue were of the most feeble constitution, and would yield implicitly to the slightest exertions of prejudice and interest. You now excite my indignation, not as a mortal frail in being seduced by evil, but as one prompt to avow and support it.

On application for a fair discussion of the case, you seemed to consider the immunities of your station impudently invaded by a desire remonstrance. You sounded aloud the horn of battle, and proclaimed the

the object of appeal a subject of contention for opposite forces, confidently relying on that enormous power, with which you can defend the most flagrant oppression. I shall observe that I regard these measures as planned and executed by Mr. C. alone. Mr. P. though he did not accede might comply with them, not perhaps wholly unmindful, that if Despotism was divided against herself, the goodly fabric which she possessed would totter to its foundations. By parity of interests and engagements, the characters of these gentlemen have been hitherto closely connected, and they were usually hailed as a *par nobile fratrum*. Their names shall be henceforth carefully distinguished. To your's, Sir, a negative value may be attached, which, when opposed to your worthy colleague's, may form an exact counterpoise: and thus in estimating the merits of this renowned Duumvirate, the countless cypher will be the final result.

In general no one can entertain a stronger aversion to an anonymous writer than myself. Enveloped in the cloud, and precluding every means of conviction, I would despise the mysterious oracle, and deem each assertion a lie, each reproof a calumny: I conceive the present case a fair exception to the general rule. Were I to avow myself, the lordly brute would fell me at a blow. Convened, arraigned, and expelled for
differing

differing in opinion with Mr. C. I might protract a miserable existence in poverty and neglect. Deprive him of his fatal instruments of vengeance, I will then present myself before the harmless monster, and maintain with unblushing front, what I have written with an uncorrupted heart.

Sir, I am convinced by your present conduct, that your judgment is puerile; and notwithstanding the versatility of your powers, I am not inclined to think better of your abilities in reply. I confess, the learning and genius of a Senior Fellow may in my opinion be numbered among those things which acquire veneration from obscurity. When the traveller views a gothic ruin in a mist, he may conceive it perfect, and magnify its importance; on a clearer examination he finds it circumscribed by the narrowest limits, and much of the little it could ever boast, mouldering into dust.

If the truth of an assertion can ever be admitted, where enquiry must be so vague and uncertain, I hope it will be believed, when I solemnly affirm, that I am not one of those, who, if they think at all, must think themselves injured by you; your conduct never affected me in the most distant degree. I once esteemed your character, nor have my affections descended

descended through any intermediate changes; extreme disgust now occupies the place of that esteem.

I am one of those who abhor despotism in any foil. I have observed that it flourishes no where so luxuriantly as in a College, and I was resolved on the first opportunity to insult it.

Your's, &c.

AN UNDERGRADUATE.